

NEW JERSEY

2000-2001

Guidelines and
Application**BEST
PRACTICES****Deadline for Application to County Office:
NOVEMBER 27, 2000**

The Best Practices application is a public document. The information that you provide will serve as the official record. Review the application prior to submission to ensure accuracy and adherence to the guidelines. Type or keyboard information requested on this page and page 2, if applicable.

Category Language Arts Literacy (Application is limited to one category. See page 3 for details.)
Practice Name International Theme Project
Number of Schools with Practice one (If more than one school or district, read and complete information on page 2.)

County	<u>Atlantic</u>		
District (Proper Name)	<u>Absecon Community Schools</u>		
Address	<u>800 Irelan Avenue</u>		
	Street/P. O. Box		
	<u>Absecon, New Jersey 08201</u>		
	City	Zip Code	
Telephone	609 641-5254	Fax	609 641-8692 Email <u>Abseconschools.org</u>
Chief School Administrator	<u>Dr. Ralph Ferrie</u>		
Nominated School #1 (Proper Name)	<u>H. Ashton Marsh Elementary School</u>		
Address	<u>800 Irelan Avenue</u>		
	Street/P. O. Box		
	<u>Absecon, New Jersey 08201</u>		
	City	Zip Code	
Telephone	609 641-4888	Fax	609 641-8692 Email <u>Jkeogh@Absecon schools.org</u>
Principal	<u>Jacqueline E. Keogh</u>		
Program Developer(s)	<u>Catherine McMahan and Theresa Maher</u>		
Application Prepared By	<u>Theresa Maher</u>		
Chief School Administrator's or Charter School Lead Person's Signature	<u>Ralph P. Ferrie</u>		

FOR USE BY COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS ONLYApproved: ☒ Yes ☐ No County Superintendent's SignatureMae T. Key

**NEW JERSEY
BEST PRACTICES
2000-2001 APPLICATION**

Application Requirements: Failure to comply with the procedures for submission of the application will result in the elimination of the application.

1. **RESPONSES to the information and the statements below must be ANONYMOUS and ACCURATE.** No reference should be made to the names of the district, the school(s) or community. Use the words "the school" or "the schools" in referring to the applicant in responding to the statements
2. **USE ONLY THE SPACE PROVIDED ON THE APPLICATION FORM on pages 1, 2 (if applicable), and 4.** Do not include any additional materials, as they will not be reviewed in the selection process.
3. Application must be **keyboared on 8 1/2" x 11" white paper, portrait format. Twelve-point or larger computer font or fourteen-pitch or larger typewritten font must be used.** (This sentence is in twelve-point Times New Roman.)
4. **KEYBOARDED RESPONSES** to all the statements below must be **no more than a total of four pages.** Keyboard and number the statement followed by the response. Format your response for accuracy and clarity.
5. The information on page 4 and the responses to statements must be copied on one side of the page. The information on pages 1 and 2 (if applicable) must be copied on one side of the page. Staple pages 1, 2 (if applicable), 4, and the keyboarded responses together, in that same order.
6. The original application must be signed by the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person, indicating his/her approval.
7. The original and seven copies of the application must be submitted to the county superintendent of schools by **November 27, 2000**, with the **Itemized List of District Applications** form. Keep the seven copies of each application together with the original containing the signature of the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person on the top of each set.

The following data is required to assist the panelists in the evaluation of the application:		
Type of School <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elementary School <input type="checkbox"/> Middle School <input type="checkbox"/> Junior High School <input type="checkbox"/> High School <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	Grade Levels 4th grade _____ _____ _____	Practice Name <u>International Theme Project</u> <hr/> Number of Schools with Practice <u>one</u> Number of Districts with Practice <u>one</u> Location <input type="checkbox"/> Urban/City <input type="checkbox"/> Suburban With Urban Characteristics <input type="checkbox"/> Suburban <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Small City/Town <input type="checkbox"/> Rural

Check the ONE CATEGORY into which the practice best fits.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Arts (Visual and Performing Arts) <input type="checkbox"/> Assessment/Evaluation <input type="checkbox"/> Bilingual Education and Diversity <input type="checkbox"/> Citizenship/Character Education <input type="checkbox"/> Early Childhood Education Programs <input type="checkbox"/> Educational Support/Guidance and Counseling Programs	<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Technology <input type="checkbox"/> Gifted and Talented Programs <input type="checkbox"/> Health and Physical Education <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Language Arts Literacy <input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Development <input type="checkbox"/> Public Engagement (family involvement and partnerships with business, community, school districts, and/or higher education)	<input type="checkbox"/> Safe Learning Environment <input type="checkbox"/> School-to-Careers/Workplace Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> Science <input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies <input type="checkbox"/> Special Education <input type="checkbox"/> World Languages

1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative and how it promotes high student achievement.
2. List the specific *Core Curriculum Content Standards*, including the *Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards*,* addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses those standard(s). Provide an example to substantiate your response.
3. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. Provide assessments and data to show how the practice met these needs.
4. Describe how you would replicate the practice in another school and/or district.

*The 1996 edition of the *Core Curriculum Content Standards* published by the New Jersey State Department of Education was disseminated to all districts and charter schools and is available on line through the department's web site at <http://www.state.nj.us/education>.

1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative and how it promotes high student achievement.

An "Evening of Literature and Tea" was developed to showcase the work created by fourth grade students during their study of foreign countries known as the International Theme Project. This event, which is held in both the library and the computer lab, affords community members the opportunity to examine student portfolio work and view students' HyperStudio presentations.

The objectives of this multiphase project are:

- To develop an understanding of a foreign country and its people.
- To understand the difficulties and consequences associated with the immigration process.
- To provide practice reading for the purposes of information and pleasure.
- To present information in written and symbolic form.
- To utilize technology as a research and education tool.
- To provide opportunities to present information in a variety of ways: orally, pictorially and written.

During the International Theme Project, each student is encouraged to research an unfamiliar country. The teacher provides background information for this research. It is the student's responsibility to research and describe the country's geographical location, the symbolic meaning of the country's flag, general information about the country's people and their lifestyle, five interesting facts about the country, and three places the student would recommend a tourist visit and why. Once written, this information is peer edited and teacher edited for final copy. The student's final draft is written in a unique flip-type book. The cover of the book is illustrated with representations of the country. The student uses a rubric to assess his/her work for completeness. The student then presents his/her report to the class. Using the same rubric, the student's classmates score the report for completeness.

Upon completion of the hardcopy report, the student utilizes technology to re-create his/her report using HyperStudio. Internet resources are used to supply graphics and photographs from the country to illustrate the information in the HyperStudio presentation.

As this process builds, students write poetry about their countries and create banners decorated with symbolic representations of their countries to hang in the fourth grade hallway. Students, who complete their reports, poems, and banners quickly, go on to make travel brochures and mobiles.

While students are researching and writing, they are reading *Dear America: So Far From Home: The Diary of Mary Driscoll, an Irish Mill Girl, Lowell, Massachusetts, 1847*. This historical novel, by Barry Denenberg, tells the story of a young Irish girl who leaves Ireland during the Potato Famine for a new life in the United States. The novel vividly describes the hardships Mary endured during her voyage and while working in the mills in Lowell, Massachusetts. Because the students identify so readily with Mary Driscoll's plight, the book properly sets the tone for discussions about immigration, bravery, prejudice, and the wonder of the human spirit.

For the final activity, students create a book of five letters written between two characters. One character lives in the local community. The other character has recently immigrated to the country the student has been studying. Each letter is written in a three-paragraph friendly letter format. Each letter describes in detail a place that the character has visited. The three places the student recommended a tourist visit in his/her report provide the basis for this information in the letters written by the character in the foreign country. Student knowledge of his/her own community provides this information for the character living locally. Another letter book requirement is that the character living in the foreign country must have a problem and need help solving it. The reading of *The Diary of Mary Driscoll, an Irish Mill Girl, Lowell, Massachusetts 1847* provides realistic problems an immigrant might face in a new country. The character living locally offers advice, and persuades the other character to put it use.

The actual letter books, which are teacher created, are hard covered and hand bound. Students mount envelopes for the letters onto the pages and illustrate them based on the content of each letter. The final products are astounding and well worth the time and effort.

Also, the Winter Party, which falls during the time of this theme, is a fourth grade International Festival held in the school cafetorium. Parents/guardians and students make ethnic dishes from the countries the children have

studied to share with the other children. The creativity and resourcefulness of our participants is something to behold. It is always a memorable experience.

To undertake a project of this magnitude requires student planning and organization. The uniqueness of the project development generates high motivation among the students. Enthusiasm for learning and creating is prevalent. Students develop their ability to link and weave similar types of information throughout a variety of products. In this process, they explore the many ways in which information and ideas can be disseminated to the reader.

2. List the *Core Curriculum Content Standards*, including the *Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards*, addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses those standard(s). Provide an example to substantiate your response.

The International Theme Project addresses many of the standards in *Cross-Content Workplace Readiness* and the *Core Curriculum Content*. However, a special emphasis is placed on the following standards:

1. All students will use information, technology, and other tools. (Workplace Readiness)
 - Students use Internet resources to obtain information and graphics for their HyperStudio presentations.
2. All students will demonstrate self-management skills. (Workplace Readiness)
 - Students must work within prescribed time frames to complete the theme projects.
 - Students use rubrics to assess their own work and the work of others.
3. All students will read various materials and texts with comprehension and critical analysis. (Core Curriculum Content)
 - Students read both reference materials and historical fiction.
4. All students will write in clear, concise, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes. (Core Curriculum Content)
 - Students compose text for a report, a poem, and a letter book.
5. All students will view, understand, and use nontextual visual information. (Core Curriculum Content)
 - Students illustrate each piece of theme writing with symbols associated with their country.
6. All students will acquire historical understanding of societal ideas and forces throughout the history of New Jersey, the United States and the world. (Core Curriculum Content)
 - Students read and discuss historical fiction to gain an understanding of the effects of immigration on society.
7. All students will acquire geographical understanding by studying the world in spatial terms. (Core Curriculum Content)
 - Students use geographical terms to describe the location of their country.
8. All students will speak for a variety of real purposes and audiences. (Core Curriculum Content)
 - Students present their reports orally.

3. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. Provide assessment and data to show how the practice met these needs.

An ever-increasing value is placed on language arts literacy skills. These skills are dependent on the understanding and use of the written word, verbal expression, and non-verbal expression. Providing students with experiences that allow them to understand the diverse nature of communication is essential to their growth as members of society. The International Theme Project provides students with opportunities to explore the many facets of communication.

It is necessary for students to gain an understanding of the world and its diverse nature in order to participate fully in our increasingly pluralistic society. This understanding enables students to analyze and act upon the ideas that not only shape world culture, but also our own. Participation in the International Theme Project is a building block in the development of student awareness of the world and its varied populations.

Finally, it is necessary for fourth grade students to develop the ability to plan and execute projects. This skill is one that is developed over a lifetime. The spiraling of the product outcomes during the International Theme Project affords students the opportunity to experience the importance of planning and its effects on product development and success.

Learning cannot be a discrete process. The integration of a variety of learning processes is essential if students are to connect the threads of prior knowledge with those of the new. It is necessary to develop curriculum that fosters the development of communication skills, extends awareness of society and the world, and encourages creativity and product success to enhance development of student growth and achievement. The spiral of activities in the International Theme Project satisfies these identified needs.

Prior to beginning the research portion of the theme, students are asked to write a paragraph about the country they are going to study. At the end of the theme, the students are asked to write a paragraph about that same country. As would be expected, the information included in the second paragraph is more developed than that of the first. Also, scoring rubrics for both student and teacher use have been developed to assess student success in completing each of theme projects. Student achievement on these rubrics is high. This success is attributed to the energy and enthusiasm generated by participation in the International Theme Project.

Students of all abilities can successfully execute the activities completed during the theme. Once the initial report is completed, all subsequent projects build upon and utilize the same information. Students who have difficulty making connections depend highly on this, while others use this as a stepping-stone to more developed work. All students find that they can achieve success if they follow project guidelines. Since the development of the International Theme Project four years ago, we have never had a student fail to complete the project requirements. The excellent attendance by students and adults, the pride of the students in their work, and the positive comments by the visiting adults at our "Evening of Literature and Tea" is our testimonial to the success of our International Theme Project.

4. Describe how you would replicate the practice in another school and/or district.

Replication of the International Theme Project is not difficult if the participating teachers and students dedicate both their language arts period and their social studies period to accomplishing theme tasks. Access to a computer lab is helpful in expediting the completion of the HyperStudio presentations. Experience has taught us that students complete the theme tasks more rapidly when they are allowed to immerse themselves in them.

Report

Completion Time: approximately 3 hours

- Materials: 18" x 12" white and colored construction paper, colored pencils, lined paper.
- Information sheets detailing the country's location, flag, lifestyle of the people, places to visit and interesting facts. *Comprehensive World Reference Guide* by Instructional Fair, Inc. supplies excellent information.
- Students research information on each area (flag, geographical location, lifestyle of the people, places to visit, and interesting facts).
- Students write short paragraphs about the flag, geographical location, the people and their lifestyle.
- Students list three places to visit; each with an explanation as to why a tourist would enjoy it.
- Students list five interesting facts about the country.
- Projects are peer edited, then teacher edited.
- Final copy is written into a five-flap flip type book. (Prototype may be obtained from school.)
- Using a rubric, students self assess the completeness of their written reports.
- Students present their reports orally to the class; classmates use a rubric to score each oral report for completeness.

Acrostic Poem

Completion Time: approximately 1 hour

- Materials: Large index card, colored construction paper for backing.
- Students write an acrostic poem about their country.

Banner Completion Time: approximately 1 hour

- Material: 9" x 12" sheets of white construction paper glued to make 23" x 9" sheets, colored pencils.
- Students brainstorm a minimum of five symbols of their country.
- Students illustrate the banner with symbols of the country and the country's name.

Travel Brochure and/or Mobile

- Students who complete the report, acrostic poem and banner, may create a travel brochure for their country or a mobile of their country's symbols.

HyperStudio Presentation Completion Time: Varies with the availability of computers

- Students replicate their report in a HyperStudio presentation.
- Five-card stack: Title card, flag card, map card, people and lifestyle card, and facts and places to visit card.
- Internet resources supply the country's map, flag and photographs for illustration.

Letter Book Completion Time: 6-8 hours

- Materials: Wall paper, 6" x 9" pieces of oak tag, glue, computer paper, needle and thread, small envelopes, white-lined paper, colored pencils.
- Four-sheet stack of computer paper folded in half to make pages for the book.
- Hand stitch the fold to bind the pages
- Leaving a ¼ inch space between the pieces of oak tag, cover with wallpaper and glue to hold.
- Students write letters between two characters. One character lives in the local community, the other has immigrated to the country the student has studied.
- Each letter follows a three-paragraph friendly letter format.
- Each of the five letters describes a place that the character has visited either locally or in the foreign country.
- The character living locally writes the first letter. The second letter, written by the foreign character, describes a problem that he/she is encountering. The third letter offers a reasonable solution to the problem. The fourth letter discusses the success of the solution. The fifth letter closes the book.
- Letters are peer edited, then teacher edited.
- The outside sheets are end pages for gluing, making the third page the title page.
- Pages 4 & 5, 6 & 7, 8 & 9, 10 & 11, 12 & 13 have an envelope glued onto the bottom of the page. The book is held with the seam at the top to accommodate the envelopes.
- Each page should be illustrated to reflect the content of the letter. We encourage students to ignore the envelope and the seam and illustrate the space as one surface.
- The end pages are glued onto the wallpaper covered oak tag.
- Each letter is copied for final draft, folded and placed in its proper envelope.
- Prototyp of the book may be obtained from the school.

Book-Historical Fiction Completion Time: Approximately 5 to 6 hours

- Materials: Copies of *Dear America: So Far From Home: The Diary of Mary Driscoll, an Irish Mill Girl, Lowell, Massachusetts, 1847*, by Barry Denenberg.
- Guided reading and group discussion.

International Food Festival

- Parents/guardian and students are encouraged to make and share ethnic foods from the countries studied.
- This event works particularly well if it is used to replace a traditional holiday party.

Evening of Literature and Tea

- Materials: Completed International Theme Projects, tea, sugar, milk, lemon, cookies, cups, napkins, and spoons, access to computers or computer lab.
- The students' families are invited to enjoy not only their child's work, but also the work of others.